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Linda McCulloch
Superintendent

October 5, 2007

To: Special Education Directors
Cooperative Directors

From: Tim Harris, Director

Re: Changes to Montana Deaf-Blind Project

As some of you already know, Francisco Román has left his position as Coordinator of the State Deaf-Blind Project, moving into a role within the School Improvement Unit of the Division of Special Education at OPI. Given the challenges of finding and hiring another person with his expertise at OPI, a decision was made over the summer to contract with the Rural Institute at the University of Montana to coordinate the activities of this grant.

Operating under the direction of Dr. Gail McGregor, the project has been reorganized to reflect the differences in staffing (several part-time people rather than a single person working full time), as well as the changing requirements of the federal funding that comes to Montana for this project. As the level of funding has been reduced across the years, the emphasis is now on training and technical assistance efforts that support capacity-building activities.

Toward this end, project staff will work collaboratively with outreach personnel from the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind to provide support to teachers and families of students who are deaf-blind. For children and families receiving Family Education and Support Services, including Part C, project staff will collaborate with Family Support Specialists employed by one of the seven regional Child and Family Services provider agencies.

I also want to take this opportunity to let you know that the federal requirements associated with the annual census of students who are deaf-blind have changed. At this time, it is now necessary to have definitive testing that verifies a loss and/or functional limitations in the areas of vision and hearing in order for students to receive supports from this project. If you have students who have been on the deaf-blind census in the past, it may be necessary for you to verify that each student file does, in fact, contain the necessary document to include the student on the census.

In the near future, you will receive information about a new Web site that has been developed to serve as a centralized information source about deaf-blindness for Montana families and educators. Currently under construction, the site will be found at the following address:
<http://mtdeafblind@ruralinstitute.umt.edu>.

If you have questions about services and resources available through this project, contact Gail McGregor at 243-2348 or Mary Steenberg at 243-5309.

cc: Steve Gettel, MSDB
Susan Bailey-Anderson, OPI
Erica Swanson, DDP

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